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Potential Communist Impact on Italian  
Defense Postures

Issues and Evidence

(Important problems that might arise from communist participation in the governments of Italy [redacted] are shaped partly by the different institutional positions of the two countries within the NATO alliance.)

(Italy, as a member of NATO's integrated military structure, has direct access to sensitive NATO intelligence, defense plans, and nuclear planning information. Any potential for communist access to this information, even if seemingly unlikely in circumstances of limited participation in the Italian government, probably would result in a cutoff of key information and planning data to Italy and thus a sharp reduction of Italian-NATO defense cooperation.)

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(Evidence on the defense policies of the Italian and French Communist parties comes from the public record of statements and writings of the parties [REDACTED])

[REDACTED] Conflicting pressures to maintain their Marxist-Leninist credentials and at the same time appeal to a wide spectrum of West European opinion often causes the Communists to "straddle the fence" on defense issues--providing a poor basis for judging what their governing policies would be. (Nevertheless, we offer the following preliminary thoughts concerning Italy [REDACTED])

(Italy)

A large segment of Italian society is reserved in its support for NATO and Italian defense policies, and Communist (PCI) attitudes on defense questions are generally shared by Socialists and other parties of the Left. On some issues, the

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PCI has supported the Christian Democratic Party against the positions taken by other leftist parties. And opposition to the government's defense programs and NATO issues is generally led not by the PCI but by Falco Accame, the Socialist chairman of the House Defense Commission.

[The chief effect of a minor PCI involvement in the Italian government (for instance, control of two or three non-sensitive ministries concerned with Italian internal matters) would likely be a tightening of restrictive trends (already affecting Italy's defense establishment) and, by extension, Italian cooperation with NATO and the US. These include: increasingly close Parliamentary control over military budgets and policy decisions; a generally skeptical approach toward nuclear weapons and facilities; a tendency to distinguish between Italian interests and needs on the one hand and those of NATO on the other--especially with reference to programs which are instigated by the US or appear primarily to benefit the US. Presumably, with a formal share in power, the PCI would more actively work to place sympathetic and "reliable" persons in important posts--including senior military ones--throughout the government.]

[It nevertheless is unlikely that the PCI would attempt to undermine military discipline or capabilities, or to

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politicize the military to an extent that would have this effect. In recent years, the PCI has behaved toward the military like a party which fully expects some day to "control the levers." While backing legislation to improve living conditions and wages and to strengthen soldiers' civil rights and liberalize disciplinary regulations, the Party has opposed military unionism as inconsistent with the requirements of military discipline. It also has stopped well short of uncritical support of protest movements and demonstrations involving non-commissioned officers that have been organized by left-wing fringe groups. Moreover, the PCI has generally supported passage of funds for military modernization programs, especially when Italian jobs are at stake. PCI parliamentarians frequently question specific defense needs or programs, and last fall they suggested delaying passage of procurement funds which had not yet been committed to programs--yet they have not played an obstructionist role. (To the extent that the PCI has neutralized the military as a source of opposition, it appears to have succeeded by convincing the bulk of military officers, like other Italians, that PCI involvement in the government is a) inevitable, and b) not particularly dangerous.)

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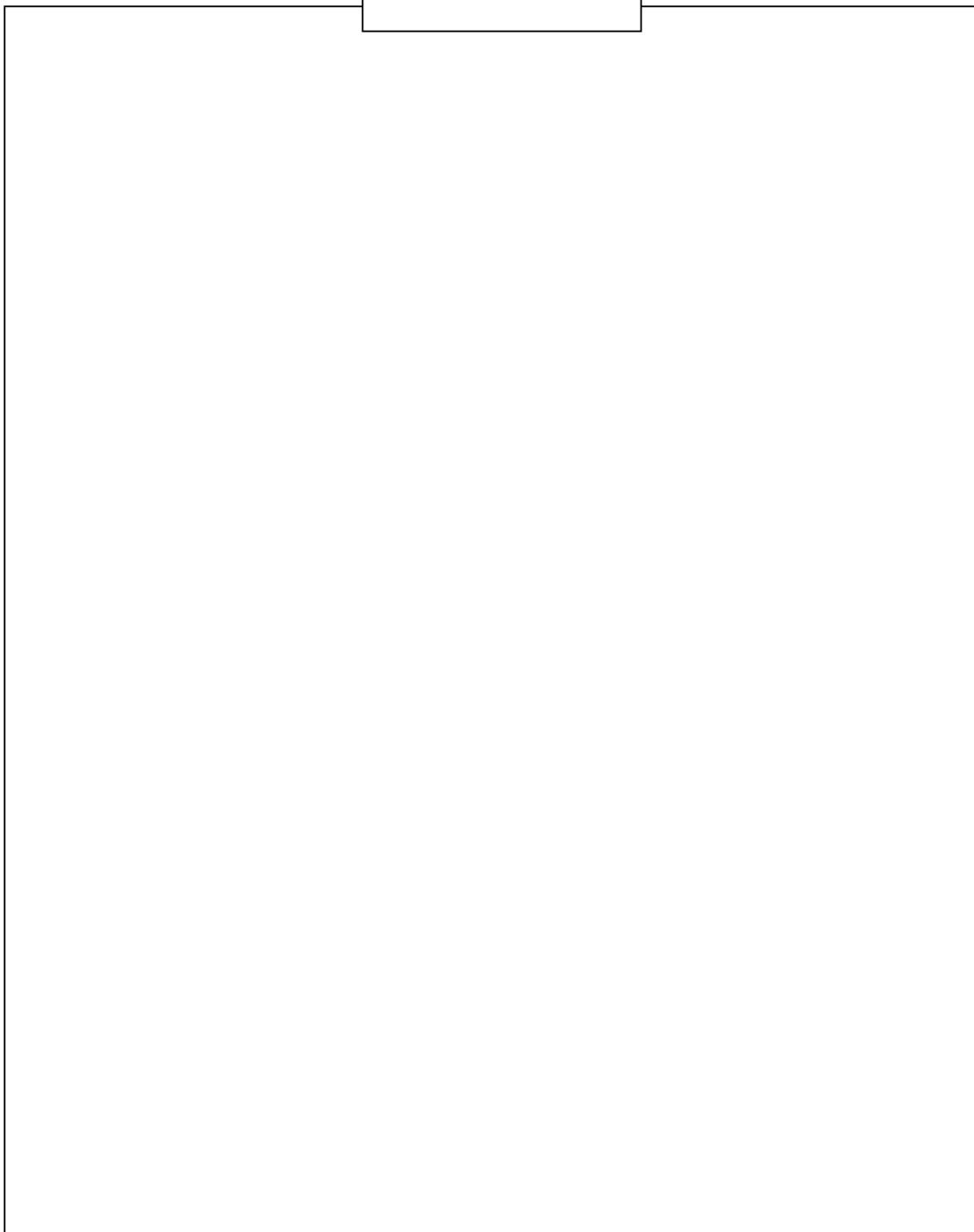
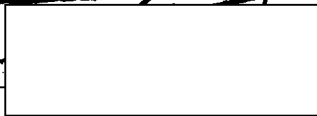
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[ If the PCI were to have substantial control in the government, more far-reaching changes are possible. The actions taken in the near-term by a PCI government would likely be heavily dependent on the attitudes and policies of Italy's NATO allies. The Party has said that it fully supports Italy's membership in the Alliance and would carry out all commitments. It would probably review very carefully any new or additional commitments in the light of its complicated attitudes toward the East-West division, its European as opposed to Atlantic orientation, its opposition to nuclear weapons, and so on. ] [ But it would likely be reluctant immediately to withdraw units committed to NATO missions, close down NATO and US facilities, or renege on already-agreed NATO weapons programs. If, however, the allies deny Italian access to classified information or close down NATO facilities in Italy, PCI ambivalence toward NATO would likely be resolved, leading to some kind of break in the relationship. ]

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